

## EUGENICS AND THE POOR LAW.

By SIR ARTHUR CLAY, BART.

To a nation, as to an individual, a great trial such as that we are now enduring is a cause for much heart searching. It has brought home to us the realities of existence, and the shock has shaken apart in our minds things that matter from those that are comparatively unimportant, but which are apt to engross our attention in normal times. This is all to the good, and if repentance for the sins of commission and omission, of which as a nation we have been guilty during these years of peace and prosperity, is genuine, and if the lessons we are learning so painfully are not forgotten when the present stress is over, we may look forward to a wiser and happier future based upon solid foundations.

Whether the effect of war is eugenic or dysgenic is—as we are told by the President of this Society—a subject “replete with controversy.” A striking testimony to the beneficial effect of military training upon the health and physique of recruits was given last month by Dr. Murray Leslie in a lecture to the Institute of Hygiene, and from this point of view war may be said to be distinctly advantageous,<sup>1</sup> but when service is—as with us—voluntary, it almost necessarily selects the fitter men, and is therefore apparently dysgenic as regards future generations; one thing, at any rate, is clear, and that is, that when a nation goes to war the physical and mental condition of its population is a factor of supreme importance; so far our soldiers seem to have withstood the strain of a terribly severe ordeal magnificently, but it must be remembered that—as I have just said—our system of recruiting is selective in its action, and one cannot help feeling some doubt whether the present physical standard of our forces would be maintained if conscription became necessary. Whether there is or is not any good reason for this apprehension, the strain to which the nation is now subjected makes the improvement of its physique—which is the object of this Society—a matter of immediate and vital importance.

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Feb. 4th, 1915, p. 6.

When I was honoured by a request to speak upon "Eugenics and the Poor Law," my feeling was that, as I have no claim to speak upon the scientific side of the Society's work, I ought not to undertake to address this meeting on such a subject, but on the cover of the Society's REVIEW we are told that "Eugenics is the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally." And since it is obvious that the Poor Law is one of the most important of the agencies referred to, it seemed to me that some comments by a social student upon the relation of that agency to eugenics might be permissible.

I propose to refer later to the effect which the administration of the Poor Law may have from the genetic point of view, but I wish first to deal with an aspect of the subject which, to my mind, is of far more importance to the Eugenics Society—I mean the moral influence of the distribution of public relief.

As we know, the conditions of life on this earth imply unceasing competition for the means of living, with the obvious corollary that the fittest competitors will survive and perpetuate their kind. As man's moral nature developed he rebelled vigorously against (what seemed to him) the cruelty of this law, and when his growing intellect had enabled him to secure easier conditions of life and to accumulate wealth, he interfered to protect his less fortunate fellows from the consequences of failure in the struggle for life. At first this attempt was made by charitable individuals and religious institutions, but later, as the social organisation of nations developed, communities began to assume the rôle of protectors, and systems—more or less elaborate—for the public relief of distress came into existence. That the spirit of charity which prompted these attempts to mitigate the rigour of natural law should exert so potent an influence upon the conduct of men is a bright omen for the future of humanity, but experience has shown that in giving practical expression to this kindly desire, the fact that natural law cannot be defied with impunity has been frequently forgotten. In the physical world disregard of Nature's laws is so promptly and effectively punished that men soon learn caution

and are in no danger of forgetting the lesson. But when the laws are those which influence the minds of men and supply the motives which govern their conduct, their action is invisible, the consequences of rebellion are not so quickly made manifest; and the inevitable punishment for defiance does not fall directly upon those who disregard the law, or upon those who think they profit by that disregard, but upon their children and upon the community to which they belong: the lesson taught is therefore not so promptly effective. This is especially true of measures for the public relief of the poor, and the world has had much and bitter experience of the consequences of neglect to foresee and guard against the danger. There is no more instructive illustration of the way in which defiance of these unseen laws is punished than that afforded by the history of the public relief of the poor in England during the earlier years of the 19th century.

The charitable impulses of the public were then greatly stimulated by the grievous distress which followed the peace of 1815, and the Poor Law was the agency employed to deal with it. The administration of poor relief had for many years previously been slack, and the efforts made to meet the increased distress led to increased laxity: the effect was to produce a widespread demoralisation of agricultural labourers, which may be said to have culminated about the year 1832, when it reached such a pitch as to threaten national disaster. The country was thoroughly alarmed; a Royal Commission was appointed to examine into and report upon the cause of the trouble, and to suggest a remedy. The Commissioners found that the cause of the mischief was the offer of out-relief to able-bodied men upon conditions which constituted a strong inducement to them to abandon their economical independence, and to rely upon parish help rather than upon their own efforts to find work and subsistence for themselves and their families. The evidence before the Commissioners upon the effect of this policy upon the character of the men and their families was startling, and vividly illustrated the danger of removing the natural stimulus to exertion by a too attractive offer of relief. What happened in this particular instance exemplifies the truth of what is so well

said by Professor Arthur Thomson in "Darwinism and Human Life" upon the bearing of the struggle for existence upon the lives of men. "Nature," he says, "is all for efficiency and down on slackness."<sup>1</sup> "But," he adds, "there is, however, the alternative of parasitism which is adopted by thousands of living creatures as the line of least resistance with its reward of material well-being and with its nemesis of degeneracy. To man, also, this alternative is offered, and it is not infrequently, in part, accepted both by lower and higher stocks, and always with inevitable attendant dangers." This is precisely what happened, men were tempted and accepted the parasitic position, and they and their families and the community suffered the inevitable penalty. To the Commissioners the cause of the evil was clear, as was also the remedy, which was so to condition the offer of assistance as to deprive it of undue temptation to abandon personal effort, and this was accordingly what they proposed should be done. The proposal was adopted by Parliament and incorporated in the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. It is known as the principle of "lesser eligibility," and its object was to make the condition of able-bodied men who accepted parish relief less desirable than that of the least well-paid independent labourer. Relief in case of real need would be forthcoming, but it would no longer be attractive; in other words, whilst men and their families would be protected against the extreme penalty for failure in the struggle for existence, the operation of the natural stimulus to exertion would not—except in the last resort—be interfered with. It was hoped that the effect of this change in the administration of relief would be to induce able-bodied men in difficulties to make renewed efforts to maintain their independence, and that it would thus act as a check upon the alarming increase of pauperism. The Poor Law record of the years following the passing of the Act shows the prompt and astonishing success of the expedient and proves the soundness of the Commissioners' diagnosis.

In order to obtain the full advantage of the principle of "lesser eligibility" it should be strictly and persistently put in force, and this might have been done had the proposal of its authors—that the Poor Law should be centrally and officially

<sup>1</sup> p. 29.

administered—been adopted, but this was rejected by Parliament, and it could not be expected that a principle which is apparently harsh, and consequently very unpopular, would be strictly enforced by a popularly elected body such as a Board of Guardians, especially after the horrors of 1832 had faded from public memory. Thus, although it has undoubtedly done much to check the increase of pauperism, its operation has been far less effective than was hoped by its originators.

So great is the danger of demoralisation inherent in all systems of public relief, and so great is the difficulty of effectually safeguarding its distribution, that eminent social reformers and economists such as Whateley, Archbishop of Dublin, and Dr. Chalmers, of Glasgow, have strongly urged that a public system of relief is neither necessary nor desirable, and that the task of providing against distress may safely be left to the people themselves, assisted, when needed, by private charity. The strong—and I may venture to say convincing—arguments by which Whateley supported this opinion may be found in the evidence given by him before a Select Committee of the House of Lords in 1832. In reply to the question whether he thought there might not be some modified plan of poor rate that might be beneficial, he said: "A great distinction is to be drawn between legal relief of that kind which tends to increase the distress that it designs to relieve, and that which has no such tendency. The relief afforded to cripples, idiots, blind, or deaf and dumb, does not tend to increase those evils. The relief that is afforded to mere want, as want, tends to increase the evil. That is the sort of relief which I deprecate; a relief to those that are in distress but able-bodied." And when asked whether he thought any legislative enactment for that purpose would be injurious to industry, forethought, and charity, he replied: "Undoubtedly, it would tend to make them leave their parents and their children to parish support, instead of attending to them as they now do; and to prevent them from laying by anything for a time of distress. They would work as little as possible, and get all they could from the parish."

Dr. Chalmers, besides maintaining the same thesis with great force and ability in his writings, gave a practical demon-

stration of its soundness by his well-known experiment in St. Giles', one of the poorest parishes in Glasgow. His reply, when asked—by a Committee of the House of Commons in 1830—to what he attributed his success in that parish, which was “far greater than he had dared to hope,” is instructive. “In the first instance,” he said, “there must have been a certain stimulus to their” (*i.e.*, the poor’s) “own industry and economy, when loosened from their dependence upon the large compulsory fund. In the second instance, there must have been an increased aid and support from relatives to each other. In the third, there must have been an increased kindness amongst the poor in the contiguous families.”

The moral of these well-known episodes in our social history is that human nature is weak, and always inclined to take the easiest path, but that every normal individual has an inherent and urgent desire to act for his own protection and interest which supplies a corrective for this weakness and acts as a stimulus to exertion, which, if responded to, arouses and strengthens his “character” and tends to make him personally and socially efficient. To relieve necessity, therefore, by a system of relief which tends to neutralise the action of this stimulus is a policy which is injurious to the man himself, to his family, and to the community. It is the response to this inherent stimulus that has secured the advance of humanity, but the inevitable competition it involves entails much individual distress. Now, as your President has said, the primary object of this Society is to discover some means of modifying this suffering, and I venture to suggest that the lesson taught by social experience, such as that to which I have referred, indicates the means by which mankind may mitigate the distress without endangering the advance of humanity.

Our social history—the events of daily life and our own personal knowledge—tells us that the qualities which form what we call “character” in the highest sense of the word, do much to assist their possessor in providing against the difficulties of life and the evils inseparable from the competition which is itself an indispensable condition of human progress.

The inference that the greater the number of people who possess "character" the less will be the amount of distress due to the operation of natural law, seems therefore to be justified. Surely, then, the first and most important object in all schemes for social reform should be to safeguard that most precious of all national possessions, the "character" of the people.

To imagine that under any system of social organisation the evils of life can be altogether avoided is merely utopian, but all social experience seems to show that a system which gives the utmost liberty for the development of individual ability and character is best adapted for facilitating advance towards this happy end, and from a eugenic point of view, therefore offers the best prospect of securing a general improvement in conditions under which the "fittest" man will no longer be the rare exception, but merely *primus inter pares*.

It may be said that in thus insisting upon the importance of moral qualities I am travelling beyond the limits of my subject, but I confess that I find it impossible to disentangle the moral from the physical factors which must necessarily affect the progress of the Society. The historical instances I have quoted (which could be indefinitely multiplied) show how greatly the increase or diminution of pauperism is governed by the moral qualities—that is, by the "character"—of the people and how materially that "character" may be influenced for good or evil by the method of administration of public relief. It is hardly necessary to point out that the conditions of life connoted by the word "pauperism" are essentially dysgenic; and it seems to me, therefore, that the Society has a strong and direct interest in the administration of public relief as affecting the morale of the people. A Poor Law so administered as to strengthen and develop the character of the people is the ally, whilst a policy of relief likely to have the opposite effect is the enemy of the Eugenics Education Society. We see, also, that in other directions it is impossible to disregard the influence of moral considerations in carrying on the work of the Society; thus, from a scientific point of view, the establishment of a system of selected mating would be highly desirable, but the mere mention of the idea raises a storm of protest on moral grounds,

and it is at once seen to be useless to discuss the question without taking into account the popular feeling it arouses. The objections to any such proposal are, of course, not only moral but political; it might, no doubt, be possible to put some system of legally-controlled mating in force in a Collectivist State with an all-powerful bureaucracy, but I cannot think that even the most enthusiastic eugenicist would be prepared to sacrifice the liberty of the nation on the altar of physical perfection. There are signs, however, that where compulsion is impossible persuasion may be successful. The now general recognition of the hereditary character of insanity will do much to help the progress of this question and to create a conviction that in justice to the coming generation consideration of the health record of the families of prospective parents ought to be an indispensable preliminary to marriage; if this became customary amongst the better-off classes—which seems not unlikely to be the case—the practice would permeate the rest of the population, and although progress might be exasperatingly slow, it would be sure. In a free country a revolution in social practice can only succeed when it commands the general assent of the people, but when once this is gained the reform would be established upon a permanent basis.

So far, I have said nothing upon the subject of “heredity” in connection with the Poor Law, and I can imagine that I may be told that since the effect produced upon an individual by contact with the Poor Law is a matter of personal experience, it can have no genetic effect, and is therefore negligible from the eugenic point of view. This, I suppose, would be the view of those who are fully convinced that acquired characteristics are not transmissible. As a layman, I do not dare to hold, still less to express, an opinion upon so thorny a question; but it is obviously one which should be taken into account when considering the influence of the Poor Law upon the character of the people. And since I find that Professor Arthur Thomson, whilst carefully guarding himself from all possibility of misinterpretation, treats the question as one upon which the last word has not yet been said, I think I may venture to refer to it as being still *sub judice*.



The Professor, when discussing the hypothesis that the tutelage of experience may count for something besides its effect in the individual lifetime, suggests the possibility of admitting that "individual experience may give a finishing touch to instinctive capacity without accepting the view that these individual gains are in any representative way transmissible."<sup>1</sup> He then describes the mnemonic theory of heredity, quotes some striking evidence in favour of that theory, and concludes that there may be more truth in the mnemonic interpretations than he personally is at present able to recognise. In summing up the case he says that, although there is no secure evidence that the gains or losses of the individual are transmitted to his offspring, "yet the progress of a race or stock looks as if these profitable lessons learnt by the individual did somehow count."<sup>2</sup>

Assuming that this conclusion applies equally to *unprofitable* lessons, then, if the demoralisation of the individual is (to however small a degree) transmissible to his offspring, the national danger of demoralisation caused by unwise public relief is greatly increased.

A committee of this Society was formed in 1910 to investigate the hereditary aspect of pauperism, but I gather that no conclusive evidence was then obtained either for or against the hypothesis that the pauper taint, as an acquired characteristic, is transmissible. The use of the case-paper system by boards of guardians gives facilities not formerly available for the examination of the family history of paupers, and it may be hoped that these researches may be continued on the lines suggested by Mr. Lidbetter's interesting paper in the Society's REVIEW for April, 1912. In that paper, the pedigree of a pauper family for three generations is given, which, on the face of it, seems to suggest the existence of an hereditary taint, but the pauper tendency shown by this pedigree seems to be explicable without any necessity for making such an assumption. The action of the Poor Law is clearly selective, it attracts the people who are wanting in grit, and who, when in difficulties, readily accept the help of others; it may fairly be assumed,

<sup>1</sup> Darwinism and Human Life, p. 601.

<sup>2</sup> Darwinism and Human Life, p. 605.

therefore, that in their case pauperism seems to be due to a pre-existing hereditary tendency transmissible to their children and so to successive generations; the appearance of pauper families, therefore, is only what might be expected. Such a transmission of the pauper taint would be assisted by the observed habit of these families to intermarry,<sup>1</sup> a tendency which appears to be accentuated when the families are of the feeble-minded type.

The remarkable records of boys who have passed through the Poor Law schools seem either to disprove the hereditary character of the pauper taint, or to be evidence of the beneficial effect of environment in counteracting the inherited tendency. Speaking in the House of Commons in 1911, Mr. Burns stated that "out of 12,700 children passed through London Poor Law schools in ten years, only fifty-two had been returned to the boards of guardians by their employers as being of bad character or unfit for their particular work." Mr. Burns added that "none of the great public schools could show anything like so good a record of conduct as did the Poor Law children when they had been sufficiently long under its jurisdiction."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Geoffrey Drage, who quotes this statement in his very useful book, "The State and the Poor," points out that in the case of the girls in these schools the record is by no means so satisfactory, a failure which he attributes to a want of adaptation to practical requirements in the system of industrial training adopted.

But from the genetic point of view this evidence is not so important as it seems. Many of the children in the Poor Law schools are not of pauper parentage; for example, a steady and industrious man dies leaving a capable widow with a young family all under school age, she can support herself and say two of her children and the Poor Law often assists in such a case by taking charge of the rest; such cases are very numerous and ex-hypothesi the inherited tendencies of these children will not be towards pauperism but rather such as would induce them to respond readily to the stimulus of a favourable environment. The children that seem most likely to inherit a pauper tendency

<sup>1</sup> An introduction to Eugenics, Mr. and Mrs. Whetham, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> The State and the Poor, 178-179.

are those of the unhappy class known as "the ins and outs," who are generally the most casual of casual labourers and who regard the workhouse as a free hotel and use it accordingly; they and their families go into the house whenever it suits them and discharge themselves whenever they feel inclined or see the chance of a job. Their children are thus deprived of the benefit of prolonged residence in the Poor Law schools and consequently of the beneficial effect *quantum valeat* of the substitution of favourable for eminently unfavourable surroundings.

It may be said that for these children the workhouse is no more detrimental than their life outside, and that—thanks to recent reforms—it is indeed very distinctly better, but if the facilities for living such a hand to mouth existence offered by the Poor Law were withdrawn, this class of pauper would either disappear altogether or such of its members as were capable of the effort would be compelled to find work for themselves and a home for their families, and in either event the community would benefit. The number of children who for longer or shorter periods are in the custody of the guardians is so large that their treatment is a matter of national importance.

On January 1st, 1914, 234,687 children in England and Wales were in receipt of Poor Law relief in some form. Of this number 68,039 were receiving indoor relief, 56,106 in establishments under the control of the guardians, and 11,933 in various other institutions. The period during which the Poor Law is responsible for these children is often so brief, as in the case of the "ins and outs," that no permanent effect from the treatment they receive can be expected, but when the period is prolonged the effect of their environment becomes proportionately important. Guardians have a wide discretion, and the method of treatment varies greatly in different Unions; there is, therefore, no uniformity in the character of the environment provided, and there is still much difference of opinion as to the most desirable form of treatment for Poor Law children. But whatever it may be it is at the best only an artificial substitute for the natural environment of family life and a mother's care. It must be remembered also that whilst the effect of early sur-

roundings upon the physique of a growing child is obvious the influence of its environment upon its moral development is not so easily ascertained; this again is a question upon which a layman should be chary of expressing an opinion.

In the "Wonder of Life" Professor Arthur Thomson says "the inherited constitution determines what is possible, but there is evidently a large range of plasticity. We do not know that modifications are entailed but we must attach all the more importance to the influence of the environment in bringing about individual adjustment, in stimulating variation, and in punctuating developmental processes,"<sup>1</sup> and again, "the developing organism is continually trafficking with its environment, and the result is a function of the intrinsic hereditary nature, on the one hand, and of the appropriate environmental nurture, on the other."<sup>2</sup>

The picture that presents itself to the mind on reading these remarks is that of an infant entering upon life with a number of inherited tendencies of greater or less potency and more or less responsive to external conditions, and it certainly seems as if the nature of the environment, whilst body and mind are growing, must have some selective influence in determining which of these tendencies will become dominant in the formation of character, and in this way deciding the attitude of the individual towards the difficulties met with in his adult life.

Sir Francis Galton was, I believe, convinced that heredity was far more powerful than environment, and most persons must have met with individuals whose inherited tendencies are so potent as to be wholly unaffected by environment, but such cases are probably exceptional, and there seems to be some ground for believing that the character of environment during childhood has some influence upon the moral as well as the physical development of a normal child. If there is any measure of truth in this supposition the treatment of children by the Poor Law must be a subject of much importance to the Eugenics Society.

There is another department of Poor Law administration which I think demands the attention of this Society; I refer to

<sup>1</sup> The Wonder of Life, p. 391.

<sup>2</sup> Darwinism and Human Life, p. 123.

the workhouse maternity wards; a married woman in straitened circumstances cannot avail herself of the advantages of these wards unless her husband goes into the house, a condition which greatly restricts their use by married women, but which offers no impediment to unmarried mothers, by whom these wards are freely and regularly resorted to.

In the Metropolitan district, during the year 1913, 2,228 children were born in the maternity wards, of which number, 1,462, or 66% were illegitimate.

A large proportion of these women are feeble-minded, and in providing favourable and hygienic conditions for the birth of their children the Poor Law appears to be actually assisting the survival and increase of an extremely undesirable class.

This is one of the social problems for which it is exceedingly difficult to find a solution which will reconcile the interest of the community with the claims of humanity. In former days the increase of this class of undesirables was checked by the operation of natural law, but in recent years the improvement of Poor Law arrangements for the lying-in of these poor women has been such as not only to nullify the natural check referred to, but to give to their infants born in the workhouse a survival advantage over children born of independent parents. The encouragement thus given to the multiplication of these children has become a serious and increasing danger to the community. This is now generally recognized. In March last year the Local Government Board issued a circular to boards of guardians calling their attention to the regulations made for carrying out the Mental Deficiency Act which came into force on the 1st of April, 1914, and we may hope that as this Act comes fully into operation, and guardians exercise the powers it confers upon them, this danger may become less menacing.

As its name implies this Society is principally concerned with genetics, and until science can give a definite answer to the question whether acquired characteristics are transmissible we have no safe basis for conjecture upon the nature or extent of the genetic influence of Poor Law treatment upon those subjected to it; a similar reason restricts speculation as to the effect of Poor Law environment upon the children under its care.

But whatever may be the final answer to these questions—if, indeed, finality is attainable—I am persuaded that the influence of the Poor Law as well as of all other forms of public relief upon the character of the people is by far the most important element in their relation to the work and the aspirations of the Eugenics Society. It is, therefore, upon this aspect of the subject that I have chiefly dwelt this evening.

The lessons taught by the experience, to which I have referred, upon the dangers of public relief are clear enough, but in the stress of political and social change, incidental to the advance of democracy, there seems to be danger lest they should be ignored.

The continued existence of poverty and distress in spite of the huge sums spent in relief led to a strong agitation for reform of the existing Poor Law, and so to the appointment of the Royal Commission which reported in 1909.

I cannot, in the time at my disposal, attempt to comment upon this report or upon that of a small minority of the Commissioners, which was also published, but I should like before concluding to say something about the existing system for the distribution of public relief and its probable development in the immediate future.

Many of the recommendations contained in the report of 1909 which do not require specific legislation have been adopted and put in force by the Local Government Board, much to the improvement of the administration, but no statutory alteration in the Poor Law has so far been made, and in spite of a strong and persistent agitation for the "break up of the Poor Law" it still survives. But although still in existence its influence has been largely undermined and its former authority as the sole source of public relief greatly diminished. In recent years a number of Acts for providing public relief apart from the Poor Law have been passed, such as the Unemployed Workmen Act, 1905, the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906, with powers enlarged by the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act, 1907, the Old Age Pensions Act, 1908, and the National Insurance Act. This legislation has made an enormous addition to public expenditure which has seriously crippled the

national resources available to meet a crisis such as that through which we are now passing. This great burden, however, might be cheerfully borne if we could feel any confidence that the expenditure would result in a real improvement in the condition of the people.

Can such a hope be reasonably entertained?

If the effect upon the poorer classes of all this relief given outside of the Poor Law were of real benefit to them we should expect to see a marked diminution in pauperism and a consequent reduction in the cost of Poor Law administration. But the annual report just issued by the Local Government Board gives very little encouragement to this expectation. Although we have had years of great commercial prosperity the total pauperism in England and Wales is only slightly less than it was in 1889, the earliest year referred to in this report, whilst in London "its volume has increased both absolutely and in proportion to population" and is now 14% above that for 1889.

In 1905, the year in which the new relief legislation commenced, the total Poor Law expenditure on relief in London was £3,866,739; in 1913, it was £3,929,427. In 1905, in the rest of England and Wales, it was £13,851,981, and in 1913 it was £14,935,605.

Poor Law statistics are unavoidably intricate, and it is difficult to draw correct inferences from figures such as those I have quoted. At the same time their general significance is unmistakable; the relief given by the legislation referred to has so far certainly failed to have the beneficial influence upon pauperism so confidently predicted by its authors.

This failure is indeed just what might be expected from former experience. As we have seen, to give relief without making any demand for forethought or exertion from those who receive it, is a policy which must tend rather to the increase than to the diminution of pauperism and distress. A new and vast eleemosinary system has been created by this legislation, which offers relief from the natural duties and responsibilities of life without making any such demand, and without even such protection against its unnecessary acceptance as is afforded by the conditions under which Poor Law relief has hitherto been

granted. In fact the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, and all the bitter experience to which that Act was due, have apparently been entirely forgotten by our legislators. But human nature has not changed, and it is difficult to believe that a policy which led to disaster in the beginning of the last century is likely to be innocuous now.

The wave of public feeling to which this legislation is due has not yet spent its force, and further legislation on similar lines may be expected. Sooner or later, however, the futility of the idea that distress can be cured by a lavish outlay of money will become apparent, and the inevitable reaction will then begin. In the meantime it behoves all those, and their number, already large, is rapidly increasing, who recognise the existence of the danger, to do all in their power to counteract the effect of too easily obtained relief upon the character of our people.

I feel confident that the work of this Society may do a great deal to assist real social advance, but I am sure that its progress will be much affected by the administration of the Poor Law and other forms of public relief. It is for this reason that I have ventured to direct the attention of the Society to a policy of relief which experience shows is likely to perpetuate and even to increase the essentially dysgenic conditions of life implied by pauperism.